

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

On January 15, I welcomed the fact that the Soviet Union had put forth arms control proposals which we hoped would help to bring progress in the Geneva and other negotiations. I noted that some elements in the Soviet announcement appeared to be constructive and to build upon our proposals which we had earlier placed on the negotiating table. Other elements, however, reflected previous Soviet positions which present serious obstacles to progress.

We made a detailed analysis of these Soviet ideas, and we consulted closely with our friends and allies in Europe and Asia prior to responding to the Soviet Union. These consultations were excellent and made a significant impact on our own thinking. We have now completed our review and reached our decision. I have communicated this to Allied leaders, and I have responded to General Secretary Gorbachev.

I expressed to Mr. Gorbachev my desire to see progress in key arms control fora and in the other key areas of the US/Soviet agenda: regional issues, human rights and bilateral matters. I reiterated the US position that the first steps in the nuclear arms control area should be the deep cuts in US and Soviet offensive weapons which are now under negotiation in Geneva.

With respect to the concept advanced publicly by the General Secretary as his "plan" for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the end of the century, I am pleased that the Soviet Union appears to agree in principle with our ultimate goal of moving to the total elimination of nuclear weapons when this becomes possible. Needless to say, this must be done in a careful manner, consistent with the overall requirements for security and stability of the United States and our allies.

As the means of accomplishing this, we support a process by which the US and Soviet Union would take the first steps by implementing the principle of 50% reductions in the nuclear offensive forces of both sides, appropriately applied, and by negotiating an INF agreement. We believe that the immediate focus should remain on the prompt accomplishment of these first necessary steps.

We are also pleased that the Soviet Union has indicated publicly that it now recognizes our long held position that verification of negotiated agreements is critical. We intend to pursue in specific

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terms at the negotiating table General Secretary Gorbachev's public offer to resolve any necessary verification issues.

On the other hand, many of the specific details proposed in the subsequent phases of the Soviet "plan" are clearly not appropriate for consideration at this time. In our view, the total elimination of nuclear weapons will require, at the same time, the correction of the conventional and other force imbalances, full compliance with existing and future treaty obligations, peaceful resolution of regional conflicts in ways that allow free choice without outside interference and a demonstrated commitment by the Soviet Union to peaceful competition. Unfortunately, the details of the Soviet "plan" do not address these equally vital requirements. I would like to make progress now on all of these fronts.

While we will strive for progress across the board, one area where I hope we may be able to make immediate progress is in the negotiations on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces. Today, our negotiators in Geneva have placed on the table a concrete plan calling for the elimination of U.S. Pershing II, Ground Launched Cruise Missiles and Soviet SS-20 missiles not only in Europe, but in Asia as well, with all such missiles to be removed from the face of the earth by the end of this decade.

I call upon the leadership of the Soviet Union to study carefully the details of our new proposal in the spirit with which it has been offered, and to respond concretely at the negotiating table. I urge the Soviet Union to respond as well to the concrete and comprehensive proposals which the United States placed on the table in Geneva on November 1. These proposals covered all three areas of the NST negotiations. Our proposals on strategic nuclear arms as well as on defense and space arms unfortunately have gone unanswered.

Let me emphasize that the place to make real progress in reducing nuclear and other forces is at the confidential negotiating table. The United States is doing its part to foster in the Nuclear and Space Talks and other negotiations the practical give-and-take process which can lead to deep arms reductions. With an equal commitment by our Soviet negotiating partners, real progress is now within our reach.

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